

Child care boost ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Fort McMurray parents are getting some relief from the high cost of child care as the province announced a 20-per cent increase in subsidies for low- and middle-income families.

Janis Tarchuk, the minister of children's services, was in Fort McMurray at the Hub Parent Link Centre Tuesday to announce the subsidy boost along with other measures to relieve the child-care crunch.

Besides the subsidies and funding to help pay for new spaces, "as an added bonus, Fort McMurray child-care professionals that work 80 hours or more per month will receive \$1,040 per month for the next three years," Tarchuk said to applause from the crowd of mostly child-care workers who gathered for the announcement, which was part of a broader plan to attract and retain workers in the field in Alberta.

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Across the province, parents who qualify for child-care subsidies are getting a roughly six-per cent boost. In Fort McMurray, however, the 20-per cent increase is a recognition of the added cost pressures local parents face, Tarchuk said.

The move to ease the child-care crunch was one of the recommendations in the Radke report, a short-term action plan commissioned by the province to resolve Fort McMurray's boom-related problems. Tuesday's announcement, which adds \$1 million to child-care funding in Fort McMurray, is the fulfillment of that recommendation, Tarchuk said.

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The new funding doesn't mean that local parents will have an easy time finding programming for young kids, however.

At the Educare preschool downtown, for example, co-ordinator Tina Tetreault said her program, which has received only minimal government funding increases in recent years, currently has 115 kids on a waiting list.

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- reprinted from Fort McMurray Today

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